

LAST CHANCE

BY THE NUMBERS

Numbers to consider when K-State takes on Nebraska tonight

39
-Total tackles for Alex Hrebec

Elected a team captain and player representative for his team, the junior linebacker leads K-State in tackles and is among the top tacklers in the conference. He has been consistent this season and puts himself in the picture on every play. Sustaining his usual relentless energy and effort will be difficult against a team like Nebraska, but his heart and that of his teammates should give the Wildcats opportunities in this game.

5
-Passing touchdowns by Carson Coffman

Admittedly, this is not a large number for the senior quarterback. Last week was certainly an improvement, with two big plays (73 yards and 58 yards, respectively) through the air that accounted for most of the passing yards in the game. Interestingly enough, Nebraska quarterback Taylor Martinez has only thrown for two touchdowns this year. Of course, leaving it at that would be disingenuous; he ran for eight others. Those numbers, however, do highlight that while Nebraska is certainly a strong team overall, its passing game might be its weakness.

1,237
-Total rushing yards for Nebraska this season

Those come almost exclusively from three guys: Martinez and running backs Roy Helu Jr. and Rex Burkhead. All but 132 of the Huskers' rushing yards came from this trio. That's not to say K-State's game plan need be just as simple as stopping those three; after its most recent game, Nebraska's rushing attack was ranked fifth in the nation. If K-State can manage to throw a wrench into that machine, I guarantee defense coordinators all over the country would take notice.

12.8
-Points allowed per game by Nebraska

This is a little intimidating. The Huskers have been holding their opponents to fewer than two touchdowns per game. Even more sobering is the fact that Nebraska has been scoring 40 points per game. Basically, the Huskers have dominated all their competition so far. K-State, on the other hand, has been barely squeezing out victories, as Coffman put it.

10.2
-Average wins for K-State in seasons that begin 4-0

Historically speaking, beginning undefeated bodes very, very well for the Wildcats. With Nebraska ranked before the 2010 season even began, it was basically understood that K-State needed to take care of its easier schedule-starter teams to have a shot at pulling what would be a huge upset over the Huskers. Despite missed opportunities and different issues from game to game, the fact K-State just keeps finding ways to win is promising.

471.2
-Yards per game for Nebraska

While defense has traditionally been Nebraska's bread and butter ... well, it still is, but now it has added some firepower to the equation. The team is averaging nearly 500 yards of offense per game. Granted, its competition has not been the best up to this point, but neither has anyone else's, and that is pretty impressive.

5
-Times K-State got inside Nebraska's 35-yard line last game

When the Wildcats played the Huskers for the Big 12 North title in 2009, they were very much in the game. They had multiple opportunities to score but were unable to convert. This year, as last year, there will be a slim margin for error. Snyder and the team have been focusing on the ability to finish. Today will be the ultimate opportunity to prove they have that capability.

-Compiled by Ashley Dunkak



Logan M. Jones | Collegian

The K-State football team leaves the field after its 17-13 win over Central Florida on Sept. 25. The Wildcats play No. 7 Nebraska in Bill Snyder Family Stadium for a nationally televised matchup that marks Nebraska's final trip to Manhattan as a Big 12 Conference team.

Wildcats set to face off against No. 7 Nebraska

Ashley Dunkak
sports editor

In what K-State players have said will be a defining point in the team's season, the Wildcats head to Bill Snyder Family Stadium tonight — Snyder's 71st birthday — to take on the nationally ranked Nebraska Cornhuskers.

There are many angles to this matchup, from the teams' matching records to their diverging futures to their potential for national attention.

The most obvious theme in this game: Nebraska is leaving the Big 12 Conference after this season. Today marks the 95th and final meeting of these two teams as conference opponents. Overall, the Huskers lead the series 77-15-2. No doubt in a similar situation to many classes before them, the 2010 seniors have never defeated Nebraska, said quarterback Carson Coffman, and that is something they want to do.

Another interesting aspect is both teams are 4-0 on the season. After lengthy periods of success in the past — although Nebraska's tradition of football excellence extends further back than K-State's — both programs had fallen into relative slumps; Nebraska had a pair of five-win seasons and was only ranked at the end of two seasons in the last six years, and K-State went through turmoil at the end of head coach Bill Snyder's first tenure and in its brief stint with former head coach Ron Prince.

The Huskers rank 14th in the nation in total offense. The K-State defense had its best performance of the season statistically in its most recent game against the University of Central Florida, allowing only 272 yards. However, the UCF kicker missed two field goals, one of which was a chip shot.

"We gave up some yardage, but we always seemed to always get a stop," Snyder said. "That does not mean that is going to be that way all the time, but that was kind of the saving grace. As it relates to starting the game, I really like the spirit and the fact that we were flying around and playing aggressively and playing hard at the outset of the ballgame."

Snyder said the team's effort and spirit were probably more consistent than some of the fundamental aspects. Against Nebraska, whose run game is ranked fourth in the country, K-State must stop advances not only to prevent scoring but also to set up its offense for shorter drives.

"Really, it is kind of a field position game in how it relates to how you are doing offensively. If it only takes you three snaps to score, that is probably a good way to play defense," Snyder said. "But putting the offense in the position where they have to go 80 yards time and time again can probably, from a team standpoint, can get you in trouble."

Nonetheless, Snyder said the fourth-quarter stand K-State took against UCF showed its commitment and heart.

"Why does it seem like we play better when we are on that end of the field? I think there is a sign of whether you have the kind of team that will give in a little bit, or where you have a team that will stand up and get a little more emotional about it," Snyder said. "I think sometimes offenses tend to change a little bit when they get into those areas, and maybe get away from some of the things that got them there. It is a combination of those things, I think."

Nebraska is the only team in the Big 12 to have rushed for more yardage than K-State. Leading the Huskers are two Californians. Freshman quarterback Taylor Martinez already has nearly 500 yards on foot, and senior running back Roy Helu Jr. has just more than 300 yards.

The passing attack is not quite as developed; Martinez has completed 60 percent of his passes, which include only two touchdowns but three interceptions. That said, the Huskers are averaging 40 points per game, while holding opponents to fewer than 13.

"We just have to stop the big plays; that is one of our goals every game is to stop the big plays," said senior defensive end Antonio Felder. "If we stop the big plays, then we can stop their big threat."

K-State's offense ranks 65th in the country. Though the consistency has not come for the Wildcats yet, their last game was worse than usual as far as yardage gained, with the much-mentioned lack thereof (only 43

yards) in the first half.

However, players remain optimistic. Coffman said it was frustrating to watch game film because often a mistake by just one player on any given play would be the catalyst to improper execution. In the 2009 Big 12 North title game, K-State's offense struggled mightily against Nebraska; the Wildcats drove to within the Huskers' 35-yard line five times but only managed three points in a 17-3 loss.

"We have a lot of work to do," said freshman tight end Andre McDonald. "Every day is a battle, and we are coming out here to get it done. Daniel (Thomas) is a good running back, and we have a great line pulling it all together. Carson (Coffman) is in the backfield to command us, and it is really nice to play with this team right now."

K-State has yet to breach the top 25 list, but it is currently ranked 27th by the AP and 29th in the Coaches' Poll. If the Wildcats win this game, it will be the first season started at 5-0 in 10 years.

K-STATE VS. NEBRASKA

When: Tonight, 6:45 p.m.

Where: Bill Snyder Family Stadium

Television: ESPN

Radio: K-State Sports Network

Series: Nebraska leads 77-15-2

Freshman tight end discusses transition into NCAA

Justin Nutter
gameday editor

Andre McDonald is a redshirt freshman tight end on the K-State football team. McDonald, from Choctaw, Okla., recorded his first career reception on a key third-down play in the Wildcats' game against UCF on Sept. 25. He recently discussed his career, including his transition to college football and what he learned during his redshirt season.

Q: Can you give a brief assessment of the team's offensive production so far this season?

A: Well, we've got a lot of work to do, but every day is a struggle. You know, we're coming out here to get it done. Daniel (Thomas) is a good running back and we have a great line holding it all together, and Carson (Coffman) is in the backfield to command us. I mean, it's really nice to play with this team right now. We've got a lot to do, but it will come.

Q: What has the transition into the college game been like for you?

A: It was a big transition. I came from a high school where we didn't pass a lot, but when we passed, it was pretty good. We weren't a very winning team. We went 6-24 out of all my years. I'm coming from a losing team, but now I'm here at Kansas State and it's really nice.

Q: What was going through your mind on that big third-down pass against UCF?

A: I had the jitters to come out in the beginning, but I knew I had to put those behind, because they didn't fare too well against Missouri State when I dropped my other two passes. I was excited they called the play to me and I cited to be the person to step up and really kind of dedicate myself to the

team and show them that, when it's time to get the job done, I'm here.

Q: How big was it for you to get that first catch out of the way?

A: It was awesome. It was amazing. I almost didn't want to run. I just wanted to jump for joy that I caught the ball, but you can't do that out here, so I turned and tried to get some yards. But I was definitely happy to see the emotion in my team's eyes and all the smiles and pats I got, so it was worth it.

Q: What kind of target do you see yourself becoming on the field?

A: A great target. As we expand, when I'm needed, I'll be there. I'm always available. My weak point would probably be blocking. I need to focus more on blocking, but I can catch very well. After practice sometimes, we'll catch some with the quarterbacks and I'm taking extra passes and throwing around with them.

Q: Would you rather be a tight end than an offensive tackle?

A: Absolutely. The tackles get the dirty work done. They're down in the pits. I'm there with them sometimes, but I'd rather release on a route sometimes and go catch a ball. Kind of get a chance to run and stretch my legs a little bit.

Q: During your redshirt year, what were you able to take from a four-year starter like Jeron Mastrud?

A: Everything. He taught me a lot. I didn't come from a good environment for a tight end. I came from a run school. If I were to be a running back, it would be nice, but when I got up here around Jeron, I'm still learning stuff from him. I'm watching film daily, talking to coach (Ricky) Rahne. Sometimes I'll talk to Jeron; send him a message



Nathaniel LaRue | Collegian

Andre McDonald (right) celebrates with Travis Tannahill (left) and Brodrick Smith after Smith scored a touchdown against UCLA earlier this season.

or something. He was a great teacher. He always knew what was going on. He knew what way to explain it.

Q: What's the feeling been like in the locker room as the Nebraska game has gotten closer?

A: We're excited. I mean, Nebraska is a great team to go out and play against. We're feeling pretty good and confident. We've just got to go out here and practice. Every day, we're talking about the game against Nebraska coming up.

Q: Do you think it stung for some of the older guys to go into Lincoln last season and come up short?

A: It does, definitely. We see a lot of it. We talked to them and you can see the emotion in their eyes and kind of — not so much the pain, but just the upset of maybe not doing it all or not getting the job done. But we're ready.

Q: What kind of added incentive is there, knowing that you'll never play Nebraska again?


A: We just want to get out there and get it done and come out No. 1. It would be kind of upsetting to know that we played Nebraska and didn't come out on top. We're not really thinking about that so much as we are just getting another game and another "W" under our belt.

N

SCOUTING REPORT


N

TAYLOR MARTINEZ
QUARTERBACK #3



After redshirting last season and working with the scout team, Martinez brought a lot of hype with him into the 2010 campaign. The freshman has proven to be an offensive threat on the ground as well as through the air. He currently leads the Huskers with 496 rushing yards, 532 passing yards and 10 total touchdowns.

ROY HELU JR.
RUNNING BACK #10



Helu, a senior, entered his final season on the brink of Nebraska's top-10 career rushing chart. His 305 yards in the Huskers' first four games increased his career total to 2,464 yards. He needs just 236 yards to pass Derek Brown for 10th in the school record book. Helu has scored four touchdowns in 2010 and 20 overall.

WR

WR

TE

RT

RG

C

LG

LT

WR

CB

NB

DE


DT

DT

DE

CB

JARED CRICK
DEFENSIVE TACKLE #94



Crick, a junior, returns as one of the top defensive linemen in the Big 12. Working alongside first-round draft pick Ndamukong Suh, Crick established himself as a defensive threat in 2009 and is off to a solid start to 2010. He currently leads the Huskers with five tackles for loss and is second with 2.5 sacks.

RB

QB

LB

LB

SS

FS

WEAKNESSES

STRENGTHS

Nebraska Cornhuskers (4-0 Overall, 0-0 Big 12 Conference)

STRENGTHS

Quarterback: The Wildcats will see their third dual-threat quarterback in as many games in red-shirt freshman Taylor Martinez. Martinez had proven more than capable as a rusher, as he leads the Huskers with 496 yards on the ground and eight rushing touchdowns in 2010. His passing, however, leaves something to be desired for Nebraska fans. Through his first four collegiate games, he's completed 34 of 57 attempts for 532 yards and just two touchdowns. He's shown typical freshman immaturity at times, as he's been intercepted on three occasions. Due to Martinez's struggles as a passer and the Huskers' lack of receiving targets — they rank 102nd nationally in pass offense — expect Martinez to tuck the ball and run often. That could mean big trouble for K-State's defense, which allowed Central Florida quarterback Jeffrey Godfrey — also a redshirt freshman — to run for 99 yards.

Running back: His 2010 numbers may not show it, but senior running back Roy Helu Jr. continues to establish himself as one of the most prolific ball carriers in Nebraska history. He's rushed 433 times for 2,464 yards and 20 touchdowns during his three-plus year career in Lincoln. However, his production has been down this season, likely due to Martinez's mobility. Through four games, he's carried 43 times for 305 yards and four touchdowns. He burned K-State for 95 yards and a touchdown last season, and the Wildcats will have to keep an extra eye on him to avoid more of the same. Sophomore running back Rex Burkhead's 2010 stats are almost identical to Helu's, as he's carried 41 times for 304 yards and three scores.

Offensive line: As is true for every run-heavy offense, the battle for success starts in the trenches. Led by left guard Keith Williams, the Huskers feature

a starting front five that possesses plenty of experience. Williams, a senior and member of the second-team preseason All-Big 12 team, will make his 24th career start tonight. Joining him up front is fellow senior guard Ricky Henry, who will handle the right side of the line. Henry has started 18 consecutive contests dating back to the beginning of last season. Junior right tackle D.J. Jones also has a streak going, as tonight will mark his eighth straight start. The Huskers' least experienced linemen are center Mike Caputo and left tackle Jeremiah Sirles. Caputo, a junior, saw plenty of time in a reserve role in each of the last two seasons. Sirles made his Husker debut at the beginning of this season.

Defensive line: One might think the Huskers' defensive front four would decline significantly after the loss of All-American defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh. But, despite losing one of the best linemen in the history of the

NCAA, the Huskers still feature a solid starting unit. The charge has been led by junior Jared Crick, who ranks fourth on the team with 20 total tackles. Crick has made a living in the backfield, recording five tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks. Defensive end Pierre Allen ranks right behind Crick with 17 total stops — two for loss — and a sack. K-State's offensive line struggled mightily in the Wildcats' last game, so they'll need to buckle down against the Huskers to help get running back Daniel Thomas back on track.

Linebacker: Lavonte David leads a young Husker linebacking corps that has caused major problems for opposing offenses in 2010. David, a junior, currently leads the team with 44 total tackles, including two behind the line of scrimmage, and a sack. He's also played a role in the passing game, as he's recorded five pass breakups in 2010. Fellow starter Eric Martin, a sophomore, ranks sixth on the roster with 17 stops.

Secondary: One doesn't have to look far to find talent in Nebraska's secondary, which ranks first nationally in pass efficiency defense. The defensive backs have combined for 10 interceptions through the Huskers' first four games. Safety P.J. Smith and cornerback Alfonzo Dennard have led the charge with three picks each. It's unlikely that K-State will elect to pass very often in tonight's contest, but when the Wildcats do air it out, quarterback Carson Coffman — who has thrown some questionable interceptions this season — will have to be careful in his decision making to avoid any turnovers.

WEAKNESSES

Wide receiver: It's no big secret that Nebraska relies heavily on the run, as the Huskers currently rank 102nd nationally in passing yards. Brandon Kennie has been Nebraska's top receiving threat this season, but his numbers aren't anything to


write home about. He's caught 17 passes for 215 yards and has yet to reach the end zone. Niles Paul owns 1,160 receiving yards in his career, but has caught just 10 passes for 144 yards during his senior season.

Tight end: After putting together a season worthy of Freshman All-America honors in 2009, it looked as though tight end Ben Cotton would play a major role in the Huskers' offense. But Cotton has been virtually nonexistent in 2010, as he's caught one pass for five yards. Fellow tight end Kyler Reed, a sophomore, has fared a little better through Nebraska's first four games. He's only caught two passes for 37 yards, but he owns one of the team's three receiving touchdowns. Expect the tight ends to play a big role in the blocking game, but don't look for them to post big receiving stats.

-Compiled by Justin Nutter

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Key strategy to beat Huskers has three specific parts



The time has come. Daniel Thomas looks to make a statement for why he should be considered a candidate for the Heisman Trophy, as well as for the Wildcats to earn a spot in the Associated Press Top 25 poll.

This game against Nebraska is most likely the biggest game of the year. It's a home game on a Thursday night and will be showcased on ESPN. For the Wildcats to win this game, they will have to a number of things on both sides of the ball.

One: Contain the Huskers' quarterback, Taylor Martinez. He has made some bad decisions throwing the ball, but is a huge threat on the ground, running for nearly 500 yards and eight touchdowns this season. His presence has made senior running back Roy Helu Jr. a decoy after Helu ran for 1,100 yards and 10 touchdowns last season. The K-State defense will want to use a better game plan after dealing with a dual-threat quarterback in the Central Florida game almost two weeks ago.

Two: Create more openings for Thomas. Thomas only had 76 yards on 22 carries and was without a touchdown against the Knights. Those statistics aren't going to get Thomas in the conversation with Heisman hopefuls. Against a stacked Husker defense, it might be tough for him to look for repeat performances when he rushed for more than 100 yards against three of the last four opponents.

Three: Carson Coffman is the starting quarterback, but I would make a bit of an argument for Samuel Lamur to

get some snaps under center. Coffman did make a great play at the end of the previous game, but it's still not enough to convince me that he should get all the playing time this week. I think inserting Lamur into the mix would throw Nebraska off balance and create some big plays for the Wildcat offense on the ground. Let's face it, with the way we have seen Coffman this year, the likelihood of K-State winning this type of game with him as the quarterback is very slim. So, Coach Snyder, please don't play Coffman the whole game.

Whoever is the quarterback will obviously need to be smart with the ball. Nebraska leads the Big 12 in interceptions, with 10. They also have one of the best cornerbacks in the nation in Prince Amukamara who will likely be a top-10 pick in next year's NFL Draft.

K-State can't have anything similar to the way the team played in the first half against Central Florida. It had to be the worst showing of the Wildcat offense in a long time. The team has had a week and a half to prepare for this game, which is plenty of time to get things set against a Nebraska team of this caliber.

ESPN will be keeping its eye on the Huskers tomorrow, but hopefully the Wildcats can ruin Nebraska's trip by pulling out a victory and moving to 5-0. I say it again, Snyder: please use Samuel Lamur. I think it would help the offense out even though he hasn't had a lot of experience this year.

This game has the potential to be a blowout or a very close game. I really think the crowd could play a factor in Nebraska's struggle, and Thomas has the chance to succeed on national television. When all is said and done, I think K-State can pull out a nail-biting victory.

Tyler Scott is a senior in print journalism. Please send comments to sports@spub.ksu.edu.

BIG 12 NORTH STANDINGS		
TEAM	RECORD	NEXT GAME
K-State	4-0 (1-0)	vs. No. 7 Nebraska
Iowa State	3-2 (1-1)	vs. No. 10 Utah
No. 24 Missouri	4-0 (0-0)	vs. Colorado
No. 7 Nebraska	4-0 (0-0)	at K-State
Colorado	3-1 (0-0)	at No. 24 Missouri
Kansas	2-3 (0-1)	vs. K-State

BIG 12 SOUTH STANDINGS		
TEAM	RECORD	NEXT GAME
No. 8 Oklahoma	5-0 (1-0)	vs. Iowa State
Oklahoma State	4-0 (1-0)	at Louisiana-Lafayette
Baylor	4-1 (1-0)	vs. Texas Tech (Dallas)
Texas	3-2 (1-1)	at No. 7 Nebraska
Texas A&M	3-1 (0-1)	vs. No. 11 Arkansas
Texas Tech	2-2 (0-2)	vs. Baylor (Dallas)

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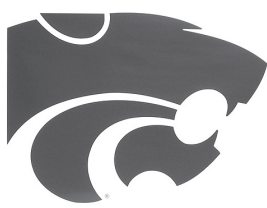
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MATCHING UP



vs.



OFFENSE



DEFENSE



A quick look at the offensive units fielded by the Wildcats and Huskers shows fans one thing in particular: both teams are extremely one-dimensional. Behind the ground game of senior running back Daniel Thomas, K-State is averaging 216 yards per contest, ranking 22nd nationally. The Wildcats trail only one Big 12 team in that department, and they'll face that team tonight.

Dual-threat quarterback Taylor Martinez, a redshirt-freshman, has been more than effective on the ground through the Huskers' first four games, as he leads the team with 496 rushing yards and eight touchdowns. Similar to Central Florida quarterback Jeffrey Godfrey — who gave K-State more than a fair share of trouble in its last game — Martinez appears to be a run-first quarterback, as his passing numbers leave something to be desired for Nebraska fans. He's completed 34 of 57 passes for 532 yards, but only two of those throws have been caught in the end zone. He's

proven to be mistake-prone, as he's thrown three interceptions.

Martinez's numbers through the air seem comparable to Wildcat quarterback Carson Coffman's. The fifth-year senior has completed 46 of 76 attempts for 639 yards and five touchdowns. Like Martinez, Coffman has also thrown some ill-advised passes this season, as he's been picked off twice in his last two games.

In a game that features two very run-heavy offenses, the "x factor" will likely be the supporting casts of the workhorses, who, in this case, are Thomas and Martinez. Coffman has plenty of targets to throw to, and will need to be very careful when called upon to do so, as the Huskers field one of the best passing defenses in the nation. Martinez faces a similar challenge against a Wildcat secondary that has established itself as a strength.

Though not by very much, Nebraska has been more productive in nearly all offensive categories, so give the Huskers a slight advantage.



SPECIAL TEAMS



The Huskers 2010 roster includes one of the most efficient kickers and punters in all of college football. But here's the best part: they're the same person. Senior Alex Henery has handled both duties since his freshman year in 2007 and established himself as a threat in both departments from the get-go. During his career, he's connected on 52 of 59 field goal attempts and has missed just one extra point try. He's only been called on for two field goal attempts this season and has connected on both. He's recorded 16 punts this season for an average of 43.8 yards. He's had some success pinning his opponents deep in 2010, as he's placed seven punts inside the 20-yard line.

Nebraska hasn't been too flashy in the return department, where four players have seen significant time. Receiver Niles Paul owns a 31-yard punt return, but hasn't reached the end zone this season. Paul

shares kick return duties with fellow receivers Brandon Kinnie and Tim Marlowe, but none of them have been very explosive to this point.

K-State's kicking situation appears to be stabilizing, as Josh Cherry has handled placekicking duties and sophomore Anthony Cantele has taken care of kickoffs. Though he's still far from perfect, Cherry has made three field goals in K-State's last two games. Punter Ryan Doerr has also been solid, as he's averaged 42.5 yards on 19 punts in 2010.

Running back William Powell has come dangerously close to breaking a return for a touchdown several times this season, and is averaging 31.9 yards per return.

While Powell's return stats might be larger than any the Huskers' returners have to offer, Henery's strong performances at both positions give Nebraska the special teams edge.

In its last game against Central Florida, K-State showed what can happen when a team disregards the pass and zones in on Thomas and the running game. The Knights often stacked nine players in the box and held Thomas to just 76 yards on two carries. It wasn't until Coffman completed some passes in the fourth quarter that Thomas finally got some breathing room and began to pick up chunks of yards.

The Wildcats could likely be in for more of the same tonight, as the Huskers enter the contest ranked 11th nationally in total defense. Things won't be easy for Coffman and the K-State receivers, as Nebraska has allowed an average of just 126.3 passing yards through its first four games. However, the Huskers' run defense has looked vulnerable against mediocre competition thus far, which could mean a big day for Thomas. If Coffman can complete a few early passes and keep Nebraska from loading up the box, Thomas could put the Wildcats in posi-

tion for an upset.

Just like their counterparts, K-State's defense has fared much better against the pass than it has against the run. The Wildcats enter tonight's game ranked 13th in the country in pass defense, but aren't nearly as good up front. That could mean trouble, as the Huskers not only feature the mobile Martinez, but also have a pair of dangerous running backs in Roy Helu Jr. and Rex Burkhead.

Central Florida tore up K-State's front seven for 252 yards and two touchdowns on the ground. Another defensive showing like that could mean catastrophe for the Wildcats. K-State will have to keep an extra eye on Martinez and remain fundamentally sound all night if it wants a chance to pull off an upset.

Just like in the offensive category, both teams appear evenly matched for the most part, but the Huskers have an edge in most statistical categories, so the edge goes to the Big Red.

PREDICTION

NEBRASKA 24 K-STATE 20

On paper, it looks as though the Huskers have an advantage in nearly every department and have the tools to put together a comfortable win. But, there are too many nonstatistical factors working in K-State's favor to consider this an "easy" game for Nebraska.

The game will be played within the friendly confines of Bill Snyder Family Stadium, where the Wildcats are 8-1 since their head coach returned last season. It's a Thursday night, nationally televised showdown that has no competition from other games. K-State is out for revenge after last year's season-ending loss in Lincoln. Oh, and don't forget that Nebraska is on its way out of the Big 12. Knowing this is the last chance they'll get to knock off the Huskers should give the Wildcats some

added motivation.

All that said, it appears the Huskers have just enough talent across the board to outlast K-State. The Wildcats haven't fared well at all against dual-threat quarterbacks this season, and their last game showed what can happen when Thomas is held in check. The Huskers have all the tools to do that.

The potential of an upset is absolutely there — if Thomas gets back on track and the Wildcats' defense can force Martinez to make mistakes, the chances go way up — but it will take a near-perfect game from K-State on both sides of the ball to make it happen.

Early betting lines had Nebraska pegged as a 12-point favorite for tonight's contest. Given all the circumstances, that seems a little high. Regardless of who comes out on top, expect this one to come down to the wire.

-Compiled by Justin Nutter

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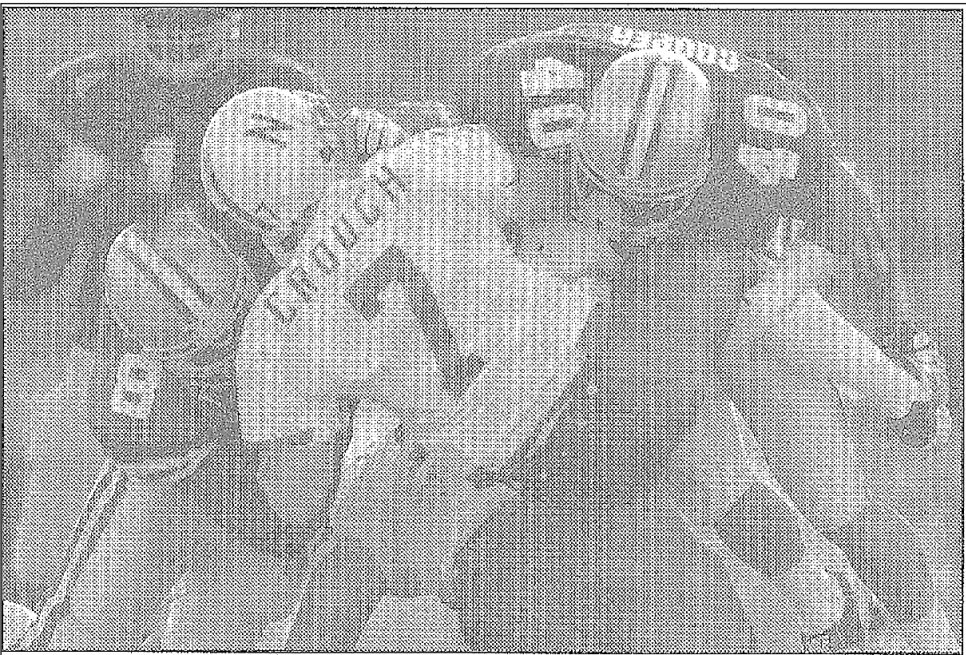
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BIG RED IS DEAD



Collegian File Photo
Nebraska quarterback **Eric Crouch** (7) is gang-tackled by K-State's **Jeff Kelly** (8) and **Jarrod Cooper** (40) during second-quarter action Saturday.



Collegian File Photo
Fans at Rusty's Last Chance Restaurant & Saloon get the goalpost from fans who brought it from Wagner Field Saturday evening.

On Saturday, K-State's 29-year itch was scratched as the Wildcats broke through and finally beat the Nebraska Cornhuskers 40-30

Jon Balmer
Collegian

The following is an article from the Nov. 16, 1998, edition of the Collegian. The K-State football team had just beaten Nebraska 40-30. It was the Wildcats' first win over the Huskers in 29 years.

After 10 years of building and crafting, the Bill Snyder master plan came full circle Saturday.

With a 40-30 victory over the former bully of the Big 12 Conference, Nebraska, K-State got its first 10-0 start in school history and earned a guaranteed spot in the Big 12 Championship game after a Missouri loss earlier to Texas A&M.

In a bloody contest that offensive lineman Jeremy Martin described as a 15-round prize fight, the knockout blow wasn't delivered until defensive end Joe Bob Clements jarred the ball loose from NU quarterback Eric Crouch with 15 seconds remaining, allowing linebacker Jeff Kelly to recover the ball and rumble 23 yards for the final touchdown of the afternoon.

The touchdown ignited a premature celebration, as fans rushed the field with three seconds remaining — the first of two early rushes for the goal posts. Once the ensuing kickoff was over, the floodgates of nearly three decades of frustration opened, and Wagner Field was transformed into a sea of purple celebration.

At the center of the celebration was quarterback Michael Bishop, who improved his record as starting quarterback in college and community college to 45-1.

Bishop was nearly the martyr for the Cats after fumbling three times in the first half. However, the senior responded with 140 rushing yards and two touchdowns. Bishop also threw for 306 yards on 19 of 33 passing and two touchdowns. His final touchdown pass to receiver Darnell McDonald with 5:25 remaining put K-State up 34-30 and proved to be the winning touchdown.

"Mike played well. He was motivated for this ball game and he stayed tough," Coach Snyder said. "Sometimes turnovers can rattle a player, but he handled it extremely well and played with confidence."

"I'm happy, I can assure you of that," Snyder said, referring to his state of emotion following the victory. "I feel very good about this win. I'm humbled by it, in all honesty, because of how long it took."

For the majority of the game, however, a goalpost celebration seemed to be in jeopardy. The Cornhuskers scored on their initial possession and forced K-State to come from behind twice in the game.

"We have not had to come back from behind this year," Snyder said. "I'm not sure we've had to come from significantly behind before with this group of players."

K-State was down 14-7 midway through the second quarter when Nebraska appeared ready to add another touchdown after a pass to Shevin Wiggins set up a first-and-goal at the Cats' 4-yard line.

However, the defense halted three rushing attempts and forced the Huskers to kick an 18-yard field goal — a stand that defensive coordinator Mike Stoops said might have reversed K-State's fortunes.

"I think that was the play of the game," Stoops said. "We were a little too emotional right off the get-go. We weren't concentrating on our assignments. Once we got in a groove, I thought we played a little bit better."

K-State responded by covering 76 yards in less than a minute, capping the drive with a 1-yard touchdown plunge by Bishop that brought the Cats within three, 17-14.

After taking a 21-17 lead early in the third quarter, the Cats' defense held NU to a three-and-out series to force another punt. David Allen received the punt at the K-State 40-yard line and returned it for 48 yards to the Nebraska 12 before being forced out of bounds. Already tied for the NCAA record for most punt-return touchdowns in a season, Allen nearly notched his fifth and set up the K-State offense with another scoring opportunity.

However, running back Frank Murphy, who was filling in for Eric Hickson after the senior left with a leg injury, was thwarted at the 8-yard line, leaving Martin Gramatica with a 25-yard field goal that put K-State up 24-17.

A Jeff Kelly interception late in the third quarter set the Cats up at the Nebraska 31, leaving the offense with the opportunity to enter the final quarter with a two-touchdown lead. On the first play of the drive, however, Murphy coughed up the ball and cornerback Ralph Brown returned the fumble 74 yards for the equalizing touchdown as the third quarter expired.

K-State regained the lead with a 21-yard Gramatica field goal, but Nebraska answered with a 9-yard touchdown pass from Crouch to tight end Sheldon Jackson that put the Huskers up 30-27. NU kicker Kris Brown missed the extra point, ending a streak of 125 straight.

After K-State regained the lead for good, the defense ended the Huskers' drive on their own 32-yard line when Crouch was sacked by linebacker Travis Ochs. Although it appeared Ochs grabbed Crouch's facemask, no flags were dropped, and the Cats took over.

"I got face-masked. I thought it was a penalty," Crouch said.

Although unhappy with the non-call, Crouch said the K-State defense was one of the best the Huskers have seen this season.

"They played hard and physical and with a lot of heart," he said. "I knew it was going to be war out there."

With the final score reflecting the end of one streak, the Cats continued another, adding to their school-record 18-game winning streak and moving one step closer to a berth in the Bowl Championship Series title game.

While the progression toward an undefeated season remained important, Stoops said silencing critics who doubted K-State could beat Nebraska was even better.

"It means everything to us," he said. "We're tired of them saying we're still Kansas State. They came into our house. We wanted to protect what we've accomplished here at Kansas State, and our kids responded like champs."

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